

1        1.        A method of managing workflows in a service provider environment in which a  
 2        service provider provides data storage resources to a customer, comprising:  
 3                providing a customer with a list of types of work order requests based on a  
 4        permission level associated with the customer, the work order requests comprising requests  
 5        to manage storage configuration;  
 6                receiving a selection of a type of work order request from the customer;  
 7                enabling the customer to generate a work order request of the selected type in a work  
 8        order request submission;  
 9                creating a database object based on the work order request; and  
 10                storing the database object in a database.

1        2.        The method of claim 1, wherein enabling comprises:  
 2                providing to the customer at least one task screen corresponding to the selected type  
 3        of work order request and usable by the customer to generate the work order request.

1        3.        The method of claim 1, wherein the work order request comprises values of  
 2        parameters specific to the selected type of work order request.

1        4.        The method of claim 1, wherein the database object comprises elements that include a  
 2        customer identifier and the selected type of work order request.

1        5.        The method of claim 4, wherein the elements further include a state to indicate status  
 2        of the work order request.

1        6.        The method of claim 5, wherein state can be set to indicate a new work order request  
 2        initially and later changed to indicate a closed work order request.

- 1 7. The method of claim 5, further comprising:  
2 assigning a work order request identifier to the work order request; and  
3 providing the assigned work order request to the customer.
- 1 8. The method of claim 7, wherein the database object is stored in the database as a table  
2 entry, the table entry including fields to store information associated with each of the  
3 elements.
- 1 9. The method of claim 8, wherein the elements further comprise the assigned work  
2 order request identifier and the work order request is stored in one of the fields in the table  
3 entry.
- 1 10. The method of claim 5, further comprising:  
2 processing the work order request using the table entry, processing comprising  
3 attempting to perform any tasks required to satisfy the work order request; and  
4 updating the state based on the results of the processing.
- 1 11. The method of claim 10, wherein updating comprises:  
2 marking the state to indicate that the work order request is closed if such tasks are  
3 performed successfully; and  
4 otherwise, marking the state to indicate a failure.
- 1 12. The method of claim 10, further comprising:  
2 generating a billable event when the work order request is closed; and  
3 storing the billable event in the database in association with the customer identifier  
4 and account information.
- 1 13. The method of claim 1, wherein work order request submission is in the form of an  
2 email.

1 14. The method of claim 1, wherein work order request submission is in the form of  
2 HTTP.

1 15. The method of claim 10, wherein processing is managed by a workflow automation  
2 that periodically queries the database to locate any new work order requests based on the  
3 state in the table entry for each work order request.

1 16. The method of claim 12, wherein the processing, updating, and the generating and  
2 storing of the billable event are handled by the workflow automation

1 17. The method of claim 15, wherein the workflow automation invokes other processes  
2 needed to perform the work order request.

1 18. The method of claim 10, wherein processing is managed manually by an  
2 administrator of the service provider.

1 19. The method of claim 12, wherein the processing, updating, and the generating and  
2 storing of the billable event are handled manually by the service provider administrator.

1 20. The method of claim 12, wherein the processing, updating, and the generating and  
2 storing of billable events are managed manually by the service provider administrator when  
3 the state indicates a failure.

1 21. A computer program product residing on a computer-readable medium for managing  
2 workflows in a service provider environment in which a service provider provides data  
3 storage resources to a customer, the computer program product comprising instructions  
4 causing a computer to:

5 provide a customer with a list of types of work order requests based on a permission  
6 level associated with the customer, the work order requests comprising requests to manage  
7 storage configuration;

8 receive a selection of a type of work order request from the customer;

9 enable the customer to generate a work order request of the selected type in a work  
10 order request submission;

11 create a database object based on the work order request; and

12 store the database object in a database.

1 22. An apparatus for managing workflows in a service provider environment in which a  
2 service provider provides data storage resources to a customer, comprising:

3 means for providing a customer with a list of types of work order requests based on a  
4 permission level associated with the customer, the work order requests comprising requests  
5 to manage storage configuration;

6 means for receiving a selection of a type of work order request from the customer;

7 means for enabling the customer to generate a work order request of the selected type  
8 in a work order request submission;

9 means for creating a database object based on the work order request; and

10 means for storing the database object in a database.  
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